

spur economic growth in America, and assist the vast majority of Americans, many of whom are struggling through a recovering economy.

In January 2001, when I was sworn-in as a new member of Congress, President Clinton was ending his second-term, and the Federal Government was projected to run a 10-year surplus of \$5.6 trillion. During the eight years of the Clinton administration, the U.S. economy created 21 million private sector jobs and incomes of middle-class families were rising. It was a time of economic prosperity. Tax rates allowed America to grow, fully pay for the cost of the Federal Government, and reduce the national debt. These years proved that responsible fiscal policymaking and a strong economy were not compatible with the Republican governing ideology we see today.

Only weeks into my first-term, President George W. Bush Republican leaders in Congress made cutting taxes and massive increases of federal spending their priorities. In 2001 and 2003, Republicans in Congress passed the Bush tax cuts at a cost to the federal budget of \$2.3 trillion. I voted against these tax cuts because they were fiscally irresponsible and unnecessary. During the Bush presidency, I also voted against the preemptive war in Iraq and the Medicare Part D giveaway to the pharmaceutical industry. Combined these irresponsible policies added \$4 trillion to our national debt in less than 10 years.

Today, our country is slowly recovering from a severe economic recession, private sector jobs are starting to be created, and families across America are fighting to get ahead. President Obama and Democrats in Congress have taken aggressive actions to create and save jobs while preventing a second Great Depression from crippling our economy.

The 2001 and 2003 Bush tax cuts are scheduled to sunset at the end of this month. Republicans included a sunset in those laws because exposing the real cost of making them permanent threatened congressional support. In other words, the cost of the tax cuts were so fiscally unsustainable that Republicans were forced to allow them to expire, placing their fate in the hands of a future Congress.

With these tax cuts about to expire and the federal budget in crisis, it is time for honesty with the American people and responsible policymaking. At a time when federal taxes are the lowest share of GDP since 1950 and the budget deficit is at \$1.3 trillion, we should all have concerns about our country's fiscal future. At the same time, we have a fragile economy and high unemployment which is squeezing middle-class families. Congress has hard choices to make on taxation, spending, and entitlements that will impact our economy, our federal budget, and the long-term security of our families.

To protect the economy until robust job growth returns, I will vote in favor of the Middle Class Tax Relief Act of 2010 (HR. 4853), which extends the middle-class tax cuts on taxable earnings of up to \$250,000 and up to \$200,000 for individuals. Under this legislation, 97 percent of American families and small businesses will receive a tax cut. It includes an extension of marriage penalty relief, the earned income tax credit, and the \$1,000 child tax credit. In addition, the bill also permanently extends the reduced rates on capital gains and dividends for middle income families.

For the wealthiest 3 percent of Americans, I do not support extending the Bush tax cuts. The cost of extending these cuts would cost the American taxpayer \$700 billion dollars over the next 10 years. History shows that tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans are the wrong way to strengthen the economy and do not create jobs. President Bush had the worst jobs record of any President since the Great Depression, actually shrinking the private sector by and losing 4.6 million American manufacturing jobs over eight years. At a time when we have soaring budget deficits, our country simply cannot afford to borrow the \$700 billion cost of these tax giveaways just to give the most fortunate Americans another tax break.

The passage of H.R. 4853 will help millions of middle class families all across the nation weather the economic storm, while letting the tax cuts for wealthiest Americans expire. Congress has an obligation to work to sustain this economic recovery, help the private sector create jobs, and ensure the long-term fiscal well-being of the Federal Government. This is a critical time for our country and I believe we must work together to provide tax relief to the middle class families hit hardest by the recession. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for the Middle Class Tax Relief Act of 2010.

#### A TRIBUTE TO JASMINE DANIELLE VELAZQUEZ

#### HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 7, 2010*

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Jasmine Danielle Velazquez.

Jasmine Danielle Velazquez is a natural born leader. Growing up in Bushwick, Brooklyn in her grandmother's three-family house, she realized at an early age the effects of economic disparities. She saw her grandmother at her ripe age of 70 remain a staple in the community, making sure that the community was treated with dignity and respect by all its inhabitants and visitors. Jasmine noticed that families were simply doing what it took to survive and experienced the real meaning of "it takes a village to raise a child."

That village helped Jasmine stay on a focused track. She was accepted into a specialized middle school in East Harlem, Manhattan East Junior High School, where she developed her love of the arts and leadership, becoming Vice President of the Student Body in 8th grade. Jasmine went on to attend a prestigious Catholic school in the Bronx, Mt. St. Ursula. Catholic school was a very unique experience. Although Jasmine was not used to the structure of Catholic education, she blossomed academically.

At the age of 17, Jasmine had an unexpected life altering decision to make—she was pregnant. Jasmine decided that she would not become a statistic as another African American/Latina teen mother. She gave birth to her daughter, graduated from high school early, and enrolled into Fordham University.

During her tenure at Fordham, Jasmine was incredibly active. She became the President of the Black Student Union her junior year, where she advocated for students' rights. Jasmine was awarded the W.E.B. DuBois Award for Academic Excellence as well as the Senior

Leadership Award for Outstanding Leadership. She received her Bachelor's of Arts at Fordham University, majoring in African and African American Studies as well as Communications and Media Studies in 2008.

Jasmine was accepted into the esteemed Teach for America program where she taught as a Special Education Teacher at P.S. 165 in Brownsville, Brooklyn. Jasmine currently teaches at Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy Upper Elementary/Middle School, where she is a Learning Specialist teaching students with special needs in small groups. Jasmine loves her job and wants to advocate for families on a larger scale.

This year, Jasmine ran for District Leader/State Committeewoman in Brooklyn's 50th Assembly District, which covers Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Fort Greene, and Clinton Hill. She ran against longtime incumbent Linda Minucci who has been serving as District Leader for over 26 years. Jasmine did not win the race, but she will continue advocating for people in her community and advance her political career.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing the achievements of Jasmine Danielle Velazquez.

#### HONORING BILL BANKS

#### HON. JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, December 7, 2010*

Mr. DUNCAN. Madam Speaker, I wish today to honor one of the most well-known and respected attorneys from my district.

Bill Banks recently passed away at the age of 82. He practiced law in Knoxville for more than 50 years, and I do not know another person who respected and honored the profession more than Bill.

He graduated from the University of Tennessee Law School in 1950 when there were many fewer attorneys than there are today. As the legal profession grew and more law practices opened, Bill became a leader among his peers.

I have nothing but fond memories of him from my own time as a lawyer and judge in Knoxville.

Bill's love of the law and government was not just limited to his practice. He also served on the Knox County Election Commission for many years and was instrumental in the transition from paper to machine voting in Knox County.

He also served admirably in the Korean War as an officer with the United Nations War Crimes Commission. His work during the war earned him a citation for meritorious service.

Those who knew Bill knew a humble and kind man devoted to his family and faith. He was a long-time member of Washington Pike United Methodist Church.

His community involvement included the Knoxville Elks Lodge, where he rose to the rank of Exalted Ruler and Trustee. He was also an active Mason and was a member of the Burlington Masonic Lodge, the Scottish Rite and Kerbel Temple in Knoxville.

I had the privilege of knowing Bill Banks personally and considered him to be a good friend for almost 40 years.